



THE

# MEADOWLARK

*A newsletter for those involved with Wisconsin's Glacial Habitat Restoration Area*



Volume 3, Issue 1

Spring 2002

## CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE MANAGEMENT BEGINS

[www.dnr.state.wi.us](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us)

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) began issuing special deer harvest permits during the week of May 20<sup>th</sup> to landowners in order to reduce the deer herd within a core area where chronic wasting disease (CWD) has been documented in western Dane and eastern Iowa Counties. The Department is also asking landowners and hunters to join a voluntary ban on deer feeding and deer diet supplements in the CWD-infected area and adjacent management units. The extent of the CWD Core Management Area will be defined based on analysis of sampling results by a CWD Interagency Health and Science team.

Placing food for hunting purposes, or baiting, is only allowed during established hunting seasons. Currently, the DNR has authority to regulate baiting during hunting seasons. Feeding is the practice of placing food on the land outside of hunting seasons or on a year-round basis and is thought to promote spread of chronic wasting disease. DNR Secretary Darrell Bazzell noted that upon learning of the presence of CWD in Wisconsin on Feb 28, the DNR quickly reallocated funds and staff to make CWD a top department priority. In addition to issuing the special permits to landowners, DNR and its partners on the CWD Interagency Taskforce - the Departments of Agriculture,

*Continued on page 3*

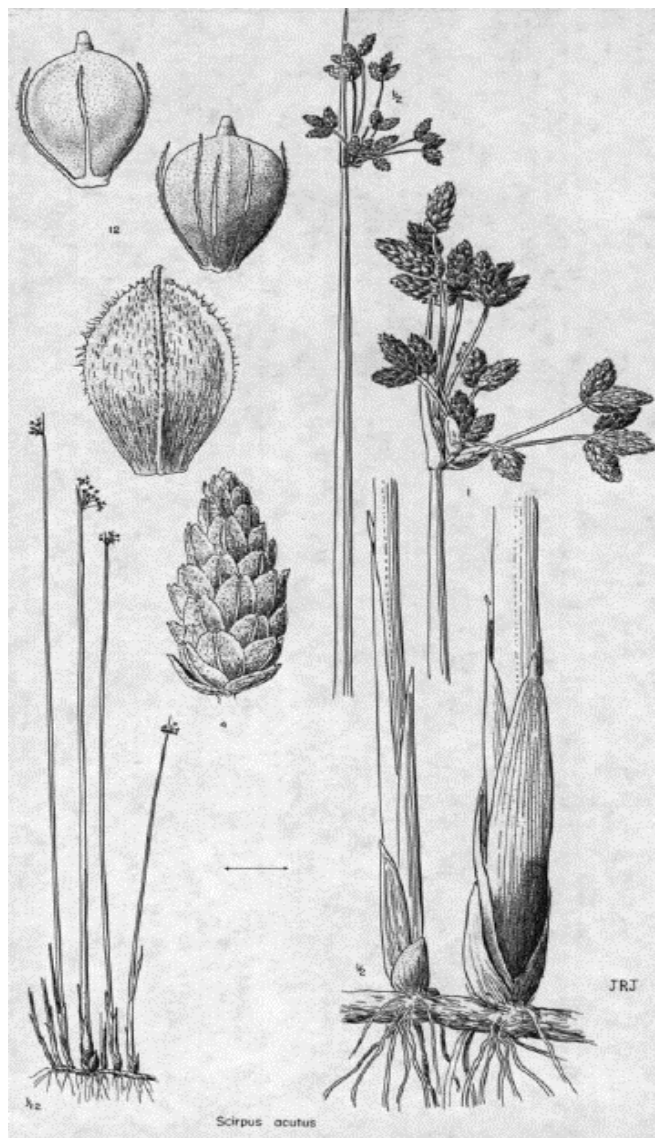
## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2	Volunteers needed for Pheasant Flush Counts
5	Farmland to Grassland - a Good Choice?
6	Species Profile - Bobolink; GHRA Staff Changes
7	GHRA Featured Property - Rush Lake GHRA

## Hardstem Bulrush

*Scirpus acutus*

*Photo courtesy U. of WI Press*



Hardstem bulrush is a perennial emergent plant that grows from stout rhizomes in wetlands. Its nutlets, rhizomes, and stems are an important food source for waterfowl, shorebirds, and muskrats. Many aquatic bird species such as terns nest amongst its 3-6 foot tall stiff stems.

# Volunteers Needed for Pheasant Flush Counts

By Matt Ruwaldt  
WDNR Wildlife Technician - Horicon



Although spring seems to be making its long-awaited return (however, as I write this it is 45 degrees with 25 mph winds), it is time to think ahead to the work to be done in the upcoming winter. This winter, Department staff, along with volunteers, will be conducting pheasant flush count surveys on many properties in the Glacial Habitat Restoration Area (GHRA). Flush counts are done to determine the hen/rooster ratio within a pheasant population for a given area. Each spring, we conduct roadside crowing count surveys that provide an index to the number of roosters for the area. By learning the ratio of hens to roosters from flush counts, we can calculate an index to the number of hens found in the GHRA, based on the number of roosters.

The last flush count survey was done in 1993, and found a ratio of 2.5 hens/rooster. Our spring rooster crowing counts have shown a slowly declining number of roosters in the GHRA (with some high years and some low years). However, we have anecdotally noticed an increase in hunting pressure, which may result in more roosters being harvested, potentially causing a skewed hen/rooster ratio. This means that even though the surveys show fewer roosters, the number of hens could be stable or even increasing. To test this hypothesis, we have decided to re-evaluate the sex ratios by again conducting the flush count surveys.

Surveys are conducted in shrub/cattail marshes on GHRA properties during the middle of winter. Cold weather with deep snow provides the best conditions because it concentrates the birds in heavy cover and makes them easier to flush. We spread out in a line and walk through the property, towards others standing on the other side of the marsh, counting hens and roosters as they are flushed.

This is where you come in! We are in need of volunteers to help conduct the surveys. It is a great chance to get out and get some exercise at a time when we would normally be sitting by the fire. Dogs are welcome and encouraged, as are family and friends. The more bodies and dogs we can have, the more data we can gather. Surveys will be done in January and February, but may depend upon personnel availability at the time. By December we should have a good idea of when the surveys will be completed. If you are interested in helping out please contact Eric Lobner at 920-485-3026 ([lobnee@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:lobnee@dnr.state.wi.us)), Brenda Hill at 920-485-9007, ([hillb@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:hillb@dnr.state.wi.us)) or Tim Lizotte at 920-424-7886 ([lizott@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:lizott@dnr.state.wi.us)). ❖

***The Meadowlark*** is published bi-annually by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Program. Its purpose is to provide information about the Department's Glacial Habitat Restoration Area (GHRA). Unless noted, material in this newsletter is not copyrighted. Reproduction for educational purposes is encouraged. Subscriptions are free. Refer to Publication number WM-349-02.

**GHRA Online:** <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/wildlife>

**Managing Editor:** Tim Lizotte  
**Contributing Editors:** Brenda Hill, Eric Lobner

Articles, news items, photos, and ideas are welcome.

Questions or Comments contact:  
GHRA Biologist-WDNR  
1210 N. Palmatory St.  
Horicon, WI 53032  
920-485-3026



**PRINTED  
ON RECYCLED  
PAPER**



The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services, and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to Equal Opportunity Office, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

This publication can be made available in alternative formats (large print, Braille, audio tape, etc) upon request. Please call (920)-424-7886 for more information.

Trade and Consumer Protection and Health and Family Services - have taken a number of steps addressing CWD management.

Steps taken by the CWD Interagency Task Force include:

- A 500 deer sample to gather more information on the disease in the area
- Working with the CWD testing laboratory in Ames, Iowa to increase the number of Wisconsin deer tested for CWD
- Discussions with US Department of Agriculture on creating CWD testing laboratories in Wisconsin
- Requesting federal funding assistance to finance a CWD control effort
- Holding an initial public information meeting in the infected area with additional meetings scheduled for May and making up-to-date CWD information available on the Internet
- Getting venison consumption and human health information out to the public
- Moving ahead rapidly with developing special hunting season proposals for the fall 2002 hunting season
- Placing tough new regulations on import of elk and deer to Wisconsin and for testing deer and elk on farms in Wisconsin

"We're not sure if we can beat this thing, but we have set a goal trying to eradicate, and we are not going to retreat from that goal. Reducing the deer herd is our next logical -- though painful -- step. Experts have told us we need to limit deer to deer contacts in order to stop transmission of CWD," Bazzell said.

"I cannot emphasize enough that hunters and landowners hold the keys to dealing with Chronic Wasting Disease. This deer herd belongs to all of us. If we want to have healthy deer and deer hunting in the future, we're going to have to do some hard things now -- open our lands and start the very sad task of drastically reducing deer numbers in the CWD zone," he said.

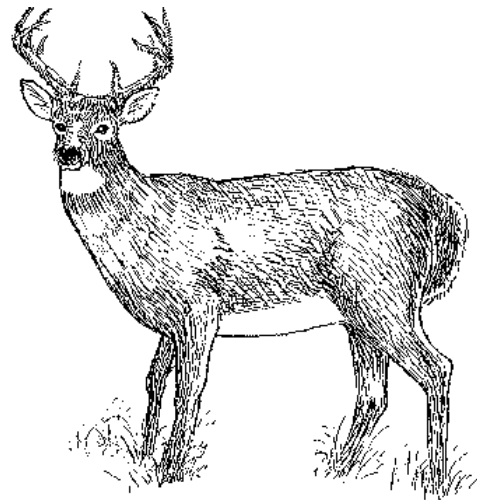
"We have a series of public meetings scheduled around the state beginning on May 1 to explain to the public why we need to take rapid and what may seem to some, drastic action. But our best chance of getting ahead of this disease is to act swiftly and decisively." Department staff have conducted four small listening sessions with landowners and hunters within the CWD surveillance area and have heard from those groups that they want quick response and for the DNR to take whatever steps may be necessary to try and curb the

spread of the disease if not eradicate it.

In addition to greatly increased hunting, the DNR is asking landowners to voluntarily halt any and all deer feeding practices within the CWD surveillance area and to remove any and all feed already on the land.

"Based on all the advice we've received from veterinary experts and wildlife managers here and in western states where the disease has existed in wild herds for over 20 years, stopping feeding is a necessary step in slowing the spread of this disease," said Steve Miller, division of lands director at DNR. Miller noted that DNR is seeking legislative authority to regulate feeding in the state in order to have more tools at its disposal to fight CWD. "In the meantime, we're asking everyone in the CWD area to pull together with us on this voluntary ban. It's pretty clear that in the CWD management areas, at least, the public is not helping deer by feeding them."

Landowners will be issued permits to take as many deer as they can under this action plan. The landowner may designate other hunters to fill the permit for them. DNR will also provide supplemental shooting assistance to landowners requesting help.



The CWD Interagency Health and Science team is currently analyzing data from a recently completed 500-deer sample and will provide guidance to further define the area the permits cover, the number of permits issued in a given area and possibly desired age and sex of deer shot.

Extensions to the fall hunting season are being developed and may go the Natural Resources Board as early as that group's May meeting. Secretary Bazzell has indicated that any state-owned lands within the CWD area will be included in the finalized herd reduction plan.

*Continued on page 4*



### What is Chronic Wasting Disease?

Chronic Wasting Disease is a new disease threat to North American deer populations. CWD is a brain disease related to Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, also known as "Mad Cow Disease." CWD affects elk, mule and white-tailed deer. It has been diagnosed in free-ranging deer and elk primarily in northeastern Colorado/southeastern Wyoming and adjacent Nebraska, but has been found in captive elk in Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Saskatchewan, and South Dakota.

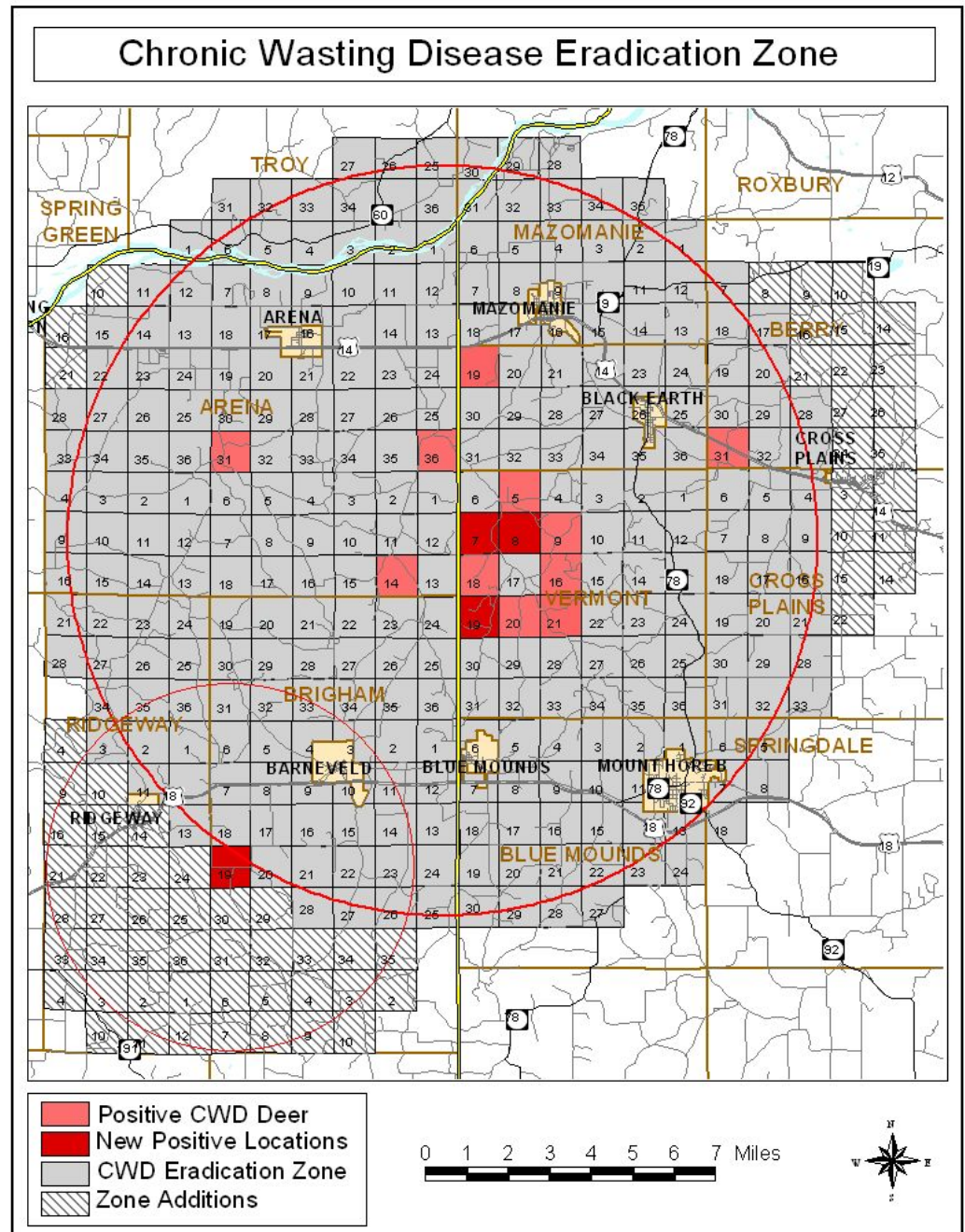
Researchers are just beginning to understand CWD. CWD appears to be caused by an abnormal protein called a prion. CWD can be spread by close contact between animals, and animals exposed to a CWD-contaminated environment may also become infected. Usually, months to years pass from when the animal is infected to when it

shows signs of disease. Classic CWD signs in deer/elk 18 months or older include poor body condition, tremors, stumbling, increased salivation, difficulty swallowing, and excessive thirst or urination. There has been no way to test a live animal for CWD; the brain from a recently dead animal is examined microscopically. Researchers in Colorado are developing a live animal test for deer, using tonsil biopsies.

### Is CWD a Human Health Hazard?

The World Health Organization has said there is no scientific evidence CWD can infect humans. However, WHO also says no part of a deer or elk with evidence of CWD should be eaten by people or other animals. Over 16 years of monitoring in the infected area in Colorado has found no disease in people or cattle living there.

For more information see the WDNR website at [www.dnr.state.wi.us](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us). ❖



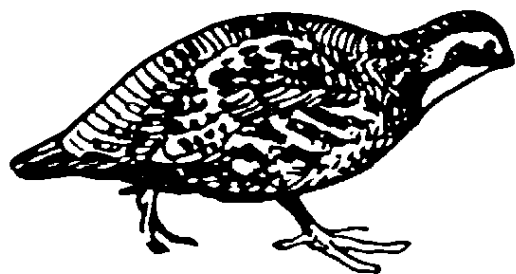
# FARMLAND TO GRASSLAND - A GOOD CHOICE?

By Tim Lizotte  
*Wildlife Biologist - Oshkosh*

Recently the Glacial Habitat Restoration Area (GHRA) has faced some local political opposition to state land purchases that primarily consisted of agricultural land. This opposition is not new, nor is it likely to dissipate in the near future. However, there are several misconceptions about state land purchases that lead to these conflicts. Read on to learn the facts about the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) land acquisition program...

Traditionally, many of the properties that the WDNR purchased for state wildlife areas were primarily wetland. This seemed a logical use for these acres as most wetlands were not well suited for agriculture or development. Also, wetlands are extremely productive wildlife habitat and an integral component of the life cycle for many species. Therefore, most people supported these land acquisitions.

In more recent times, the Department has begun acquiring wildlife areas with significant upland acres as part of its land program. The GHRA is the first WDNR wildlife project area that has a major focus on upland acquisition in order to provide permanent grassland habitat. Why? Because many declining wildlife species need grasslands for some part of their life cycle. Many other species carry out their entire lives in grasslands. Therefore, in order to provide the best grassland wildlife conservation for your acquisition dollar, the DNR needs to purchase properties that provide the critical upland components needed by local wildlife species.



During a recent conversation regarding this topic I was asked why the Department needs to purchase additional upland acres in the vicinity of the Eldorado Marsh State Wildlife Area. "Hunters have been complaining there aren't as many ducks as there used to be" I was told. However, mallards and blue-wing teal both require secure grasslands for nesting. Their

broods must then walk (half mile or less is ideal) to permanent wetlands shortly after being born where they spend the summer foraging on aquatic invertebrates and plants. These duck species are the number one and two birds in the bag for the Wisconsin duck hunter, and the vast majority of mallards and teal that are harvested in Wisconsin are born here as well (70% of mallards and over 50% of teal). Consequently, if we don't produce many ducks in the state, hunters are not going to shoot many ducks in the state.

Another argument used against Department purchases is that of reduced taxes. Local municipalities complain that they will lose tax revenues if the state purchases land in their jurisdiction. This is simply not true. On all lands acquired since 1992 the Department makes an annual aid payment equivalent to property taxes pursuant to §70.114 of the state statutes. On lands acquired prior to 1992 the state makes aid-in-lieu-of-tax payments at a reduced rate pursuant to §70.113 of the statutes. Therefore, on all recent purchases there is no loss of revenue for any taxing jurisdiction.

---

*In order to provide the best grassland wildlife conservation for your acquisition dollar, the DNR needs to purchase properties that provide the critical upland components needed by local wildlife species.*

---

Finally, another argument against the WDNR purchasing uplands is that the land is needed by local farmers and that the Department is contributing to the loss of farmland in the state. The Department only purchases land from willing sellers at a price equivalent to fair market value as determined by recent local land sales of similar properties. Hence, the Department is not willing or able to "outbid" farmers or any other land buyers. Many of the properties we buy are from people who want to see their land preserved for wildlife. In addition, we focus on purchasing marginal farmlands that are highly erodible or are drained wetlands, making them ideal properties to retire from farming. The main loss of farmland in the state is not due to conservation purchases, rather to development and urban sprawl. Sound land use planning by local governments is the long term solution to farmland preservation.

The GHRA was initiated in order to reverse the population decline of grassland nesting birds such as ducks, songbirds, and pheasants in east-central Wisconsin. Many of these birds prefer to nest in drier rather than wetter grasslands, and this is why the project was granted the authority to acquire uplands. The GHRA program will continue to purchase uplands along with wetlands to fulfill our acquisition goals and provide quality nesting cover and habitat for these birds and other wildlife. ❖

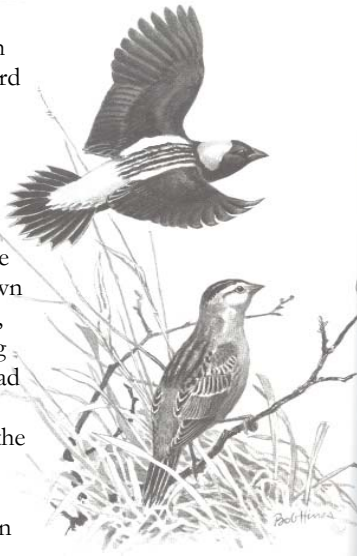
## GHRA Species Profile

### Bobolink

*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*

By Brenda Hill  
*Wildlife Biologist - Horicon*

Are you familiar with our grassland songbird the Bobolink? An easily identified bird, the males' obvious marks are its pale yellow colored patch that extends from the back of the head down the nape of the neck, solid black feathering on the rest of the head and underparts, and white feathering on the back. The female is light brown in color with dark stripings on the crown and back.



The song of the bobolink is a bubbling and excited chirping, starting low and becoming higher. Listen for it as they fly amongst the tall grasses.

Wisconsin is part of the Bobolinks breeding range and they begin to arrive here in late April to mid-May from their wintering grounds in South America. You will find these grassland birds in prairies, hay fields and moist meadows. The female builds her nest in dense vegetation where it will be well concealed on the ground and lay 5 - 6 eggs. She incubates her clutch of eggs for approximately 14 days, then both the male and female tend to the young until they fledge the nest.

Research has shown that Bobolinks respond positively to properly timed burning or mowing. These habitat maintenance treatments prevent the encroachment of woody vegetation. Burns should be conducted in the spring prior to the adults arriving from the wintering grounds or in the fall after they have departed. Haying should be prolonged until mid-July when the nesting season is complete to protect the young.

The Bobolink is one of many grassland species that the GHRA is restoring habitat for.

Take care and happy birding this season!❖

## STAFF CHANGES IN THE GHRA

Friday May 17<sup>th</sup> was the last day of work for Steve Krueger as a WDNR wildlife technician limited term employee (LTE). Steve had amassed 8 years working for the WDNR as a wildlife and Fisheries Technician for the Horicon office, the last 3 of which were for the GHRA program. Steve was our expert equipment operator and could be counted on to operate or repair any piece of equipment ranging from bulldozers to seed drills. In his last few years Steve also took an active role in property management, prescribing management activities for many state properties and then organizing crews to do the work. Steve has taken a permanent job with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services, where he will work on wildlife damage problems out of the Waupun office. We wish Steve the best of luck with his new job.

The GHRA has also added two new Wildlife Technicians to our staff. Matt Ruwaldt (Horicon office) and Craig Schultz (Oshkosh office) started this spring and will be kept busy planting, mowing, posting, and conducting other land management activities.

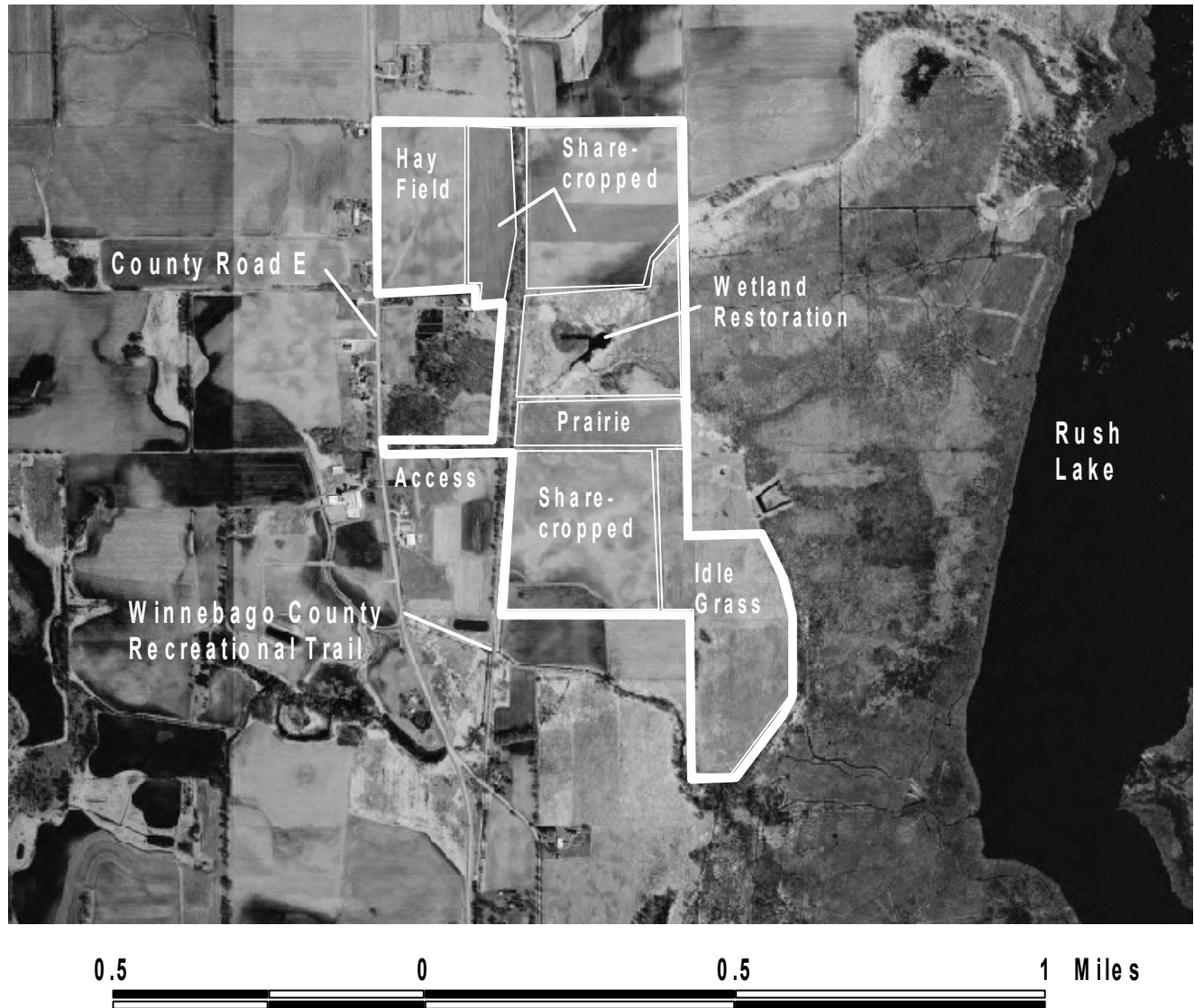
Matt is originally from Lodi, Wisconsin, and graduated in May of 2001 from UW-Madison with a B.S. in Wildlife Ecology. This is his third WDNR position, with the first being at the State Game Farm in Poynette. His second position was as a prairie restoration intern at Goose Pond Sanctuary near Arlington. With this internship, he learned a great deal about prairies and prairie management, and brings this knowledge to the GHRA.

Craig grew up within the GHRA in Eldorado Township and comes to the project with a great deal of wildlife experience, starting with his degree in Natural Resources from Fox Valley Technical College. After graduation Craig interned for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service evaluating wetland and grassland restorations in the Leopold Wetland Management District. From there he held several positions with the WDNR including being a Park Ranger at Pike Lake State Park, and working as a Fisheries and Wildlife Technician out of the Wild Rose and Wautoma offices. At these jobs Craig worked with many types of equipment to restore and maintain hundreds of acres of fish and wildlife habitat.

Both Craig and Matt have a keen interest in hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities and are excited to be working in the GHRA. If you see them working in the field feel free to stop and say "hi"❖

## ***GHRA Featured Property***

### **Rush Lake GHRA**

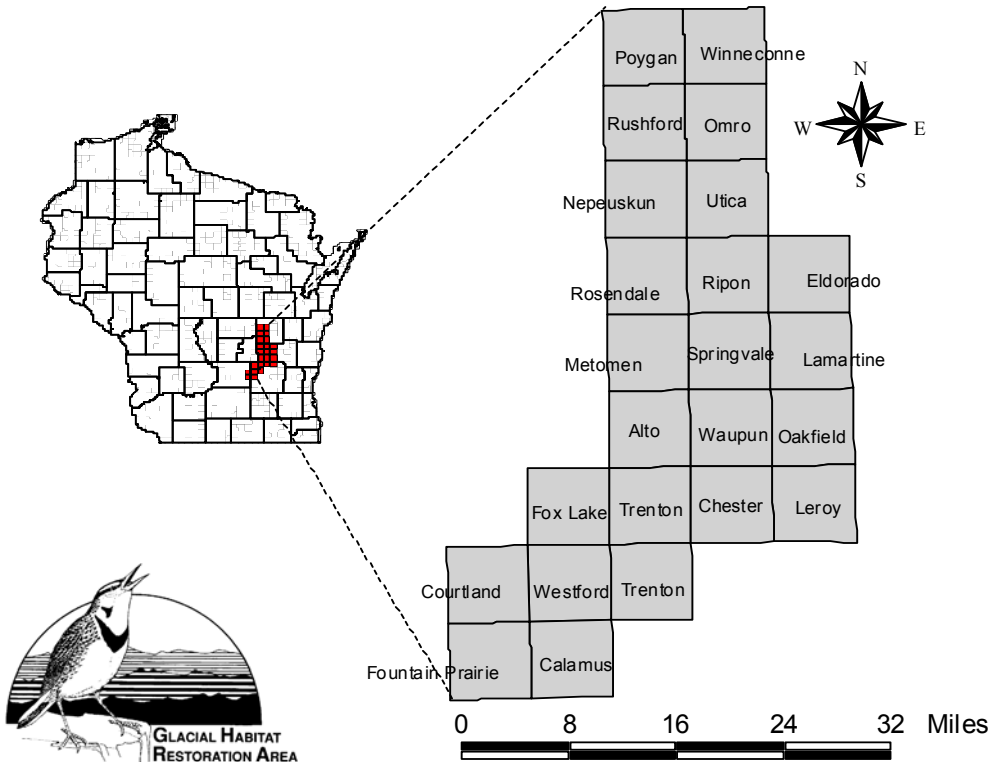


**Previous Landowners:** Marvin Wesner, Marikay Warnke, and Penny Reno  
**Location:** Nepeuskun Township, Winnebago County  
**Size:** 215 acres

This property is located along the west shore of Rush Lake and was purchased by the DNR for wildlife conservation in two segments, one in 1982 and one in 2001. The property consists mainly of uplands with some scattered bur oaks, a wetland restoration project, and some marsh surrounding Rush Lake. Several fields are being sharecropped and will eventually be converted to native prairie grasses. Access is provided via a DNR easement from County Rd. E. Turkeys, pheasants, ducks, and songbirds can be found nesting and foraging in the permanent grass fields and deer are always present in the tall cover. The high hills provide a scenic view of Rush Lake to the east, while the Winnebago County Recreational Trail runs through the property and provides a good means of foot access. ❖



# Glacial Habitat Restoration Area and Staff



Brenda Hill  
Wildlife Biologist  
1210 N. Palmatory St.  
Horicon, WI 53032  
920-485-3007  
[hillb@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:hillb@dnr.state.wi.us)

Tim Lizotte  
Wildlife Biologist  
625 E. Cty Rd. Y, Ste. 700  
Oshkosh, WI 54901-9731  
920-424-7886  
[lizott@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:lizott@dnr.state.wi.us)

Eric Lobner  
Wildlife Biologist/  
GHRA Coordinator  
1210 N. Palmatory St.  
Horicon, WI 53032  
920-485-3026  
[lobnee@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:lobnee@dnr.state.wi.us)

Matt Ruwaldt  
Wildlife Technician - Horicon  
920-485-3011

Craig Schultz  
Wildlife Technician - Oshkosh  
920-303-5443



Glacial Habitat Restoration Area Program  
1210 N. Palmatory Street  
Horicon, WI 53032